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AN

ADDRESS,

DELIVERED AT

NEWBURYPORT.

JULY 5, 1824.

IN COMMEMORATION OF

AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE.

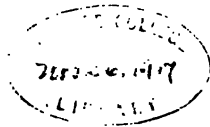
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1824.

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*William Leach Grant
Esq. of the New England
Anti-Slavery Society*

AT a meeting of the Newburyport Debating Society, July 9, 1824.

VOTED, That the thanks of this Society be presented to Mr. N. CLEAVELAND, for the chaste and elegant Address delivered before them, at their request, at the late anniversary, and that the Hon. Ebenezer Moseley, Capt. Eleazer Johnson, and Col. Abraham Williams be a Committee to solicit a copy for the press.

From the records.

J. T. BALCH, Sec'y.

ADDRESS.

HOW ought we to celebrate the natal day of our country's freedom? How may we, at once, consult our own advantage, and render to the illustrious founders of our republic the tribute, which they deserve? No commemoration, if I do not mistake, is truly entitled to the name, which does not go beyond the merely external demonstrations of festive joy. Alone, these can but excite the animal feelings, and afford, perhaps, a momentary gratification. There is a spectacle more splendid than the blaze of bonfire and rocket;—there are sounds more noble than any which ring from the loud mouths of bells and guns, which on this hallowed jubilee, every American should see and hear. That spectacle is the view which he may take of his country's happiness and glory;—those sounds are the language, however simple it may be, which conveys to heaven a nation's gratitude,—and which expresses to freemen the congratulations of freemen.

It is for its moral uses that this festival is chiefly to be prized, and in proportion as they may be auxiliary to these are all others to be valued. On this day, peculiarly, will memory be busy with the glorious past,—contemplation will delight to dwell on the present,—and hope will look forward with new ardor to the future. A day it should be of magnanimous thoughts—of glowing and generous resolutions. On

this day, at least, in each revolving year, should the millions of our countrymen think and feel alike. No spirit of faction, and no low ambition should contaminate the scene, when assembled thousands meet in friendship, and lay their willing offerings on the altars of their country, and of God.

It is well known that, for several years past, the active notice of this anniversary has, by general consent, devolved, chiefly, on the younger portion of the community. Not, we may fairly presume, because our fathers have lost their interest in the occasion, or the events which it commemorates. *This*, we should pronounce impossible, even did they not still cheer us with their approving presence. May it not be, that aware how rich and noble the inheritance, which they must soon leave their sons, they would lead them early to consider and to estimate its value, and better fit them for the period when they shall have become its possessors and guardians? The idea is at least, so natural, that it will not, I hope, be thought too great a deviation from common usage, if in conformity with it, the brief remarks which may follow, should have their principal reference to the class just named. It can do us no injury, my friends, to reflect, for a few moments, on some of those considerations, which we may suppose that our seniors in age and station would solicitously charge upon our minds, and impress upon our hearts; in other words, to enquire, what should be the sentiments and views,—and what are the resulting duties of the young American.

Disconnected from that strong feeling, the love of country, we can form no idea of a true citizen, whether young or old. And what is that emotion so uni-

versally praised—so often pretended—and, if we may believe the demagogue, so rarely found? Is it a general and undistinguishing sentiment, which scorns the little details of affection, and passes by the endearments of kindred and friends, to embrace in its broad arms nothing less than an empire?

“When was public virtue to be found

Where private was not? Can he love the whole,

Who loves no part? He be a nation's friend,

Who is, in truth, the friend of no man there?”

Rather, does not this feeling primarily rest on the social affections? If, indeed, it be not as correct to trace it to a more simple source—to that justifiable self-love, which serves but to waken those virtuous sensibilities, whose expanding circles successively include a neighborhood, a country, and a world. Home the scene of heart-felt delight, friends the solace and ornaments of life, and all the interests of the immediate corporation or society to which he belongs, are not less a portion of that *country*, which the good man loves, than are her more extended character and relations, the government and privileges in which he glories, her public prosperity, and her wide renown. Whatever, therefore, tends to render us exemplary in the discharge of personal and domestic obligations, just in common dealings, courteous and honorable in our social relations, or zealous and discreet in promoting the welfare of our town or village, will bear as directly on our patriotism, and as truly advance it, as would the spirit that should prompt to far higher efforts,—that would seek the purest of civic honors, or the highest and noblest in military achievement.

And it is a consideration well worthy our attention, that it is thus, and thus only, that the greater part of

us can act at all. Generally it may be asserted, that our duties, as citizens, lie at home and in our own vicinity. But a very small proportion of the community are called to the camp,—the senate,—or the cabinet. With us, therefore, the enquiry of chief interest is, what will best fit us for our destined sphere of action. If the view just taken be correct, the character of good citizenship implies all the principles and obligations of morality and virtue, and these might, with propriety, be urged even by him, whose only object is to inculcate the duty of patriotism. For me, and for the occasion it is sufficient to say, that we may well esteem it the richest privilege we enjoy, that of necessity, almost every individual in our happy community learns the principles, and is exhorted by the motives, which not only tend to make him a better member of society, but which must lay the foundation of his highest happiness and hopes.

Unsupported by the solid basis of virtuous habits, no social compact can long endure. ‘Virtue’—says the voice of unerring experience, and she points you, while she speaks, to the wrecks of a thousand states, ‘virtue is the only safeguard of nations.’ To those whose governments rest on popular principles, the remark is doubly applicable, and peculiarly so to our own. This the ingenuous youth will remember, and feel that he cannot more effectually serve his country, than by endeavoring with whatever influence he may possess, to elevate and sustain the tone of her public morals. Such an one will prefer the calm satisfactions of undeviating rectitude and conscious purity, to the most lucrative and the most elevated station, that can only be purchased by the sacrifice of his integrity,—and

in the candidate for office and honours, he will seek merit rather than factious zeal, and look for principle sooner than for talent.

Next to virtue, in universal estimation, comes intelligence, since without knowledge and wisdom to direct, the best intentions may be led astray. Auspiciously for our hopes of freedom and happiness, the means of information are more extensively diffused, and more generally applied at the present day, in our own country, than they have been in any other period, or portion of the world. Of this privilege we can never think too highly. Its increase and extension should be among the first objects of individual and national effort—as they will certainly be among the first to promote personal felicity and public glory.

To us it is an object of nearer moment, to ascertain which among the numerous and diversified branches of knowledge, rendered by our wise institutions universally accessible, are most important in their political bearings, and best fitted to form the judicious and intelligent citizen. A very few of these, my brief limits may permit me to mention.

And as first that presents itself, I would suggest the study of our political systems. While this would certainly mean more than a mere familiarity with constitutions and public enactments, it does not necessarily imply nor require, a deep or extensive knowledge of the science of government and legislation ;—nothing, in fact, beyond the reach and means of plain republican men. On these points our own admirable writers have collected all that is important, nor need we wish for better illustrations, or more satisfactory arguments, than those, which they have given us.

Without attempting to be very minute, let us consider, for instance, how beneficial would be the influence, should our countrymen generally acquire correct notions of the nature, and right adjustment of those different checks and balances, on which our fathers founded the frame of their government. This indeed is but one of the numerous and interesting branches of political science,—but in a country like this, it is one of paramount importance. Let this principle continue unimpaired in our forms of government, and we need not fear for their perpetuity; for thus, the very passions and clashing interests of men, which work the destruction of other states, shall prove our safeguard and advance our happiness.

The usefulness of such knowledge we shall not easily overrate, while we perceive new constitutions daily forming, and old ones undergoing amendment, or while we consider that there ever has been, and ever will be, an aristocratic spirit on the one hand, that would abridge the popular privilege, and a radical spirit on the other that would level all distinctions. Which of these two factions would be most pernicious in its ultimate ascendancy, it may be difficult to say. Heaven preserve us from the sway of either! That there is less danger from one, than from the other, few probably will doubt, who consider, even slightly, our past history and present character. The almost presiding sentiment has always been that of opposition to the pride of rank, and the arrogance of wealth. The spirit of independent equality had scarcely sprung to full life in England, when our pilgrim fathers, transferred it to these more genial shores, and it has ran down in their blood through seven successive genera-

tions, displaying itself, whenever there has been opportunity, with an intenseness and energy almost unparalleled. The sentiments, which grew up during the long struggle with our mother-land, and, particularly, during the war which brought that struggle to a close, have come to us by inheritance, and will descend to our posterity. Reasoning even from past analogies, centuries must elapse ere those feelings and impressions can be rooted out and effaced. Is not the danger then, if there be danger any-where, on the popular side? And should our country ever be doomed to feel the curse of despotism, is it not most likely to be when some master-spirit shall contrive to embroil and foment those very elements of our community, which seem now the most jealous of liberty, and most startled at the thought of usurpation? It is from the wild horrors of anarchy, that men flee to the death-like calm of absolute power. But such visions are not for us. Let us not cherish them. We know, and duty and interest forbid us to forget it, that there is a redeeming spirit, which can rescue and preserve us. Let virtue and knowledge go hand in hand, and long as time shall last, shall our nation be free, and happy, and glorious, and invincible.

It must be evident to all, that while we shall be able to preserve, in purity and perfection, the most admirable form of representation, that has ever been devised,—that while frequency of election and rotation in office shall continue to be maintained,—the opinions of our governments, both executive and parliamentary, must generally coincide with those of the people. It seems impossible that rulers and legislators, unaided by military force, should long act in opposition to the

views of the majority who elect them. If then the sentiments of the community will be virtually the sentiments of the government, directing its whole policy and course of action, how important that this community should possess at least some acquaintance with all the great principles of politics and legislation. It is not sufficient to survey the foundations only of our political fabric;—we should know something of the various parts of the superstructure, and learn their uses and relations; be able to explain the style of its architecture; estimate aright even its lighter graces and ornaments; and feel and value the beauty of its fine proportions.

Nor would I forget to say, in this connexion, that the statesmanlike study of political economy is interesting and important, not to the *statesman* only. All are aware to what ruinous mistakes, and long courses of disastrous policy, ignorance of this science has led in times past. And have we not witnessed in our own enlightened age and country, and most recently too in our highest councils, opinions advanced, and a system supported, which to us appear directly opposed to the soundest maxims of that science, and to the true interests of the nation? Reasoning the most lucid and powerful, and resistance the most strenuous and persevering, did but barely prevent the evils, which we feared. The nations of the old world, who have long been groaning under their monopolies and restrictions, are just awakening to their senses, and throwing aside their voluntary manacles,—and shall we be proud to wear their cast-off fetters? Let but the simple and well founded principles of political economy become generally understood; let our colleges and schools throughout the land, make them a part of

systematic instruction, and it is no rash prediction to say, that we should hear no more of these disgraceful collisions between different sections, and interests supposed to be different, which are, in reality, one and the same. Powerful minds would no longer be found, acting in opposition to their own honest convictions, when ignorance and false views in their constituents should no longer require it. Men would legislate for the *common* good :—and with the triple league of our intelligent and virtuous merchants, manufacturers, and farmers, we would hardly fear even the million bayonets of another *triple league*.

How many and how valuable the lessons of instruction, which are afforded us by the records of past generations ;—deeds of the wise, and brave, and good, who have gone to their rest and reward, as they are illustrated and preserved to us by the pen of genius. Where will the emulous aspirant after honorable fame find higher incentives to persevering ardor,—or the humblest lover of his country's weal, more animating motives for the discharge of duty, than are contained in the historic and biographic page? Glorious and immortal art—which embalms as it were the very soul of man, and transmits to posterity his sentient being;—not confined in a single pictured sarcophagus for the inspection of the curious, but multiplied and dispersed in innumerable impressions for the benefit of all his race. What the Egyptian bitumen could not accomplish, the Egyptian papyrus with ease effected,—and we may still contemplate almost in their primitive freshness and beauty, the features and characters of minds, which thought and acted in the earlier ages of the world. There is many a splendid name in the

annals of republican Greece and Rome, which the youth of republican America will appreciate and admire, however they may disapprove the follies and vices of those nations at large. These they will study, not so much, we should hope, to catch a tone and spirit from the thunderbolts of war, not even their *Miltiades* and *Scipios* ; as to dwell on the stainless virtues of the *just* Athenian, and emulate the singleness of purpose, calm simplicity, and unbending firmness, which marked the characters of men like *Fabricius* and *Regulus*.

And how much does history teach us of the great interests of nations,—of that policy both internal and foreign, which alone can perpetuate our free institutions. What pictures does it hold up to our view of terrific despotism and more terrific anarchy. How surely does it describe the ruinous progress of luxury and vice. Often with the Muse of History for our guide, let us walk silent and thoughtful, amid the ruins of past empires and republics, assured that in every crumbling monument, we shall find a faithful and friendly monitor.

By no means the most inconsiderable in importance and interest, are the annals of our own land. No one, with truly filial and patriotic views, can become acquainted with the character of his pilgrim ancestors, or read the narrative of their efforts and sufferings, and not associate with veneration for their goodness, and astonishment at their enduring fortitude, a warmer sentiment of regard for his own invaluable privileges. Of fathers like these, false and contemptible indeed must be the pride, that would make us ashamed. And could I believe that the time would ever come, when such a

sentiment should generally prevail, I should feel constrained to say of my country, in reference to that period, the day of her ruin draws nigh. But it can never be. All that is valuable—all that is solid in our institutions or character, we have derived from them. And far be it from us to scrutinize, with severity, faults, that they shared in common with an age, above which in other respects they rose so high. Nor let us overestimate our own advancement, though ours may be the milder graces, and the gentler arts of life. These may be the beautiful ornaments, but can never become the substitutes of virtue. Of what avail, the polished shaft of the column, or the soft acanthus-leaves of its corinthian capital, if the firm pedestal itself be swept away.

But of still greater value than any knowledge of the past, and, may I not add, of indispensable utility, is an acquaintance with passing events,—with the actual condition and progress of our race. It is thus only that sympathy is awakened, and benevolence enabled to exert herself for the good of others. Whatever relates to the proceedings of our general and state governments,—to schemes of improvement and efforts of philanthropy among us,—to the progress of education and virtue in our land,—to the rapid and astonishing developement of our seemingly illimitable resources,—or to our relations and connexions with other countries,—must ever have the first claim on our attention. These would we never neglect, since thus furnished, and thus only, shall we be prepared to fill, with discretion and energy, our parts in the busy scene of action. And on these points, how much is there to be known, that may well elevate the proudest spirit, and cheer the most benevolent. How much, that encour-

ages us to preserve and maintain, at any cost, a government, purchased by our fathers' blood, and founded by their wisdom. How much that incites us to persevere in that national policy, both foreign and domestic, which has hitherto been attended with such unexampled success.

Should we contrast with other countries the condition of our own, may it be, not for the sake of invidious comparisons, but to gain a deeper sense of our privileges and obligations. Ours may it never be to add one pretext for reproachful taunts on our national vanity,—yet should some supercilious minion of legitimacy ask ;—“ Of what are Americans so proud ? ”—thus, at least, we might venture to reply. We are proud of a government and of institutions essentially free :—of civil and religious liberty with all its train of blessings, not granted us by the kind condescension of a fellow mortal, but obtained, under God, by our own strong arm, and determined resolution. We glory, in a community, where every citizen is assured of impartial justice, and enlightened laws,—and where the means of education and the ordinances of religion are almost universally enjoyed. We love the land, which was the scene of our fathers' toils and dangers, and which still holds their mouldering bones. We shew an escutcheon, which though plain, is stainless,—and, not least of all, one great compatriot name, the thought of which were enough, almost, to fill the ambition of the mightiest and noblest in any land or age.

But not to his home, dear as it may be ;—not to his country, though to him it seems the happiest and the best, are the thoughts and wishes of the good citizen confined. Wherever man is to be found, there

is his brother,—and though wintry forests, and arid wastes may stretch between—though mountains and oceans may interpose their barriers, still with friendly ardor will he search him out. Breathes he, like himself, the pure air of freedom?—he greets him with the honest glow of fraternal affection. Does he cower an ignorant and degraded slave?—still his sympathies awaken, and his heart burns to relieve. Is there one American youth, who on this day of hallowed and glorious remembrances, sends no thought abroad to his struggling brethren in the cause of liberty? Cold and degenerate must be his spirit, and adulterate the blood, that creeps in his veins.

It is but one short year this day, since many a sincere and sympathising wish went forth from this very spot, to the fair fields of invaded Spain. Too soon alas! were those fond hopes cut off, and we beheld with astonishment and regret, the “*Mene, Tekel, Upharsin*” inscribed on the frail walls of her short-lived freedom. Yet even of Spain, we will not despair. Corrupt and degenerate as she has long been, her ordeal must needs be fiery and severe. Let us still hope to behold her, when she shall come forth purified and regenerated, and rise like Antaeus stronger from her fall.

And are there any, who are still struggling for liberty and laws?—any, who even now rally round the banner of independence,—not like us in peace and festivity to recline beneath its folds, but amid scenes of fire and blood, to watch it by night, and fight for it by day? Yes—there are :—and for them have this morning ascended the prayers of the faithful from a thousand temples. For them, at this moment, perhaps, a million true American hearts are beating in unison

with ours. In the vast realms of Southern America, amid scenes whose grandeur suits her mighty spirit, Freedom again hears the awful voice she loves, and quitting her cheerless home, in the untrod snows and the thin blue air, descends to bless the green mountain side, and floats down with its streams to the plains below. And, beyond the western and the midland oceans, after an absence of two thousand years, has she revisited her earliest haunt, the "bright clime of battle and of song." Never!—never may her flag cease to wave on the tops of the Andes, or the citadels of Greece!

And now, my compeers, allow me to ask,—with so much before us for contemplation and for action, can we ever hesitate for the path we should pursue? With so much, on the one hand, to fear and to lose, and so much to stimulate and reward us on the other, can we ever become inactive in the course of duty? Shall we waste the strength and expend the zeal, which should be given to the great interests of philanthropy and of country, in the fierce quarrels of contentious party?—in determining whether this man, or that man, shall hold the reins of government, when, if the people are true to their duty, it would be almost as difficult for either to guide *very* wrong, as the miserable factionary has sometimes found it to stop the wheels? No—our honor—and happiness—and the spirit of the age—require a different course. Their guidance let us follow;—that when the time shall come,—and long be the day protracted! that we must look around us and say, Our fathers, where are they? we may not be unprepared to fill their places, or to meet, with ability and readiness like theirs, the great claims of PATRIOTISM and VIRTUE.

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